

Scen
VENICE PRESERV'D;

OR,

A PLOT DISCOVER'D.

A TRAGEDY.

WRITTEN BY

THOMAS OTWAY.

TAKEN FROM

THE MANAGER'S BOOK,

AT THE

Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane.

L O N D O N:

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Bot Murchard

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DRURY-LANE.

M E N.

Duke	—	Mr. Chaplain.
Priuli	—	Mr. Aickin.
Bedamar	—	Mr. R. Palmer.
Jaffier	—	Mr. Kemble.
Pierre	—	Mr. Bensley.
Renault	—	Mr. Packer.
Elliot	—	Mr. Fawcett.
Spinosa	—	Mr. Wright.
Officer	—	Mr. Phillimore.

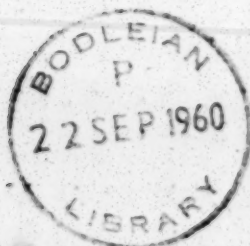
W O M E N.

Belvidera	—	Mrs. Siddons.
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Two Women, Attendants on Belvidera.

The Council of Ten.

Officer, Guard, Executioner, and Rabble.



VENICE PRESERV'D.

ACT I. SCENE, *a Street in Venice.*

Enter Priuli and Jaffier.

Pri. NO more! I'll hear no more! begone and leave me.

Jaff. Not hear me! by my sufferings but you shall!
My lord! my lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me. Patience! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me?

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaff. Could my nature e'er
Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrong,
I need not now thus low have bent myself
To gain a hearing from a cruel father.
Wrong'd you!

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me! in the nicest point,
The honour of my house, you've done me wrong.
You may remember (for I now will speak,
And urge its baseness) when you first came home
From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on
By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;
Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you
Court'd, and sought to raise you to your merits;
My house, my table, nay, my fortune too,
My very self was yours; you might have us'd me
To your best service; like an open friend
I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine:
When, in requital of my best endeavours,
You treacherously practis'd to undo me;
Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
My only chil'd, and stole her from my bosom.
O! Belvidera!

Jaff. 'Tis to me you owe her:
Childless you had been else, and in the grave
Your name extinct; no more Priuli heard of.
You may remember, scarce five years are past,
Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
The Adriatic wedded by our duke;
And I was with you: your unskilful pilot
Dash'd us upon the rock; when to your boat
You made for safety: enter'd first yourself;
Th' affrighted Belvidera, following next,
As she stood trembling on th' vessel's side,
Was by a wave wash'd off into the deep:

When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
 And buffeting the billows to her rescue,
 Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.
 Like a rich conquest in one hand I bore her,
 And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,
 That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :
 Indeed you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude
 Rose in her soul ; for from that hour she lov'd me,
 'Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Pri. You stole her from me ; like a thief you stole her.
 At dead of night : that cursed hour you chose
 To rife me of all my heart held dear.
 May all your joys in her prove false, like mine ;
 A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,
 Attend you both ; continual discord make
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous still :
 May the hard hand of a vexatious need
 Oppress and grind you ; till at last you find
 The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaff. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;
 Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves
 With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty :
 May he live to prove more gentle than his grandfire,
 And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
 To bate thee for his bread, and din your ears
 With hungry cries ; whilst his unhappy mother
 Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaff. You talk as if 'twould please you.

Pri. 'Twould, by Heav'n !

Jaff. Would I were in my grave !

Pri. And she too with thee :

For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancer,
 I once was happy.

Jaff. You use me thus, because you know my soul
 Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive
 My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.
 Oh ! could my soul ever have found satiety ;
 Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs
 As you upbraid me with, what hinders me
 But I might send her back to you with contumely,
 And court my fortune where she would be kinder ?

Pri. You dare not do't.

Jaff.

VENICE PRESERV'D.

Jaff. Indeed, my lord, I dare not.
 My heart, that awes me, is too much my master :
 Three years are past, since first our vows were plighted ;
 During which time, the world must bear me witness,
 I've treated Belvidera like your daughter,
 'The daughter of a senator of Venice :
 Distinction, place, attendance, and observance,
 Due to her birth, she always has commanded.
 Out of my little fortune I've done this ;
 Because (tho' hopeless e'er to win your nature)
 The world might see I lov'd her for herself ;
 Not as the heirs of the great Priuli.

Pri. No more.

Jaff. Yes all, and then adieu for ever.
 There's not a wretch that lives on common charity,
 But's happier than me : for I have known
 The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night
 Have slept with soft content about my head,
 And never wak'd, but to a joyful morning :
 Yet now must fall, like a full ear of corn,
 Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's withered in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble ; study to retrench ;
 Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
 Those pageants of thy folly :
 Reduce the glit'ring trappings of thy wife
 To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :
 Then, to some suburb cottage both retire ;
 Dudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve——
 Home, home, I say. [Exit.]

Jaff. Yes, if my heart would let me.
 This proud, this swelling heart : home I would go,
 But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
 Fill'd and damn'd up with gaping creditors.
 I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
 Yet still I am in love and pleas'd with ruin.
 Oh Belvidera ! Oh ! she is my wife——
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,
 But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter Pierre.

Pier. My friend, good morrow.
 How fares the honest partner of my heart ?
 What, melancholy, not a word to spare me ! [Quality,

Jaff. I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damn'd starving
 Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villainy first set it up,

For its own ease and safety. Honest men
 Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
 Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains
 They'd starve each other; lawyers would want practice,
 Cut-throats rewards; each man would kill his brother
 Himself; none would be paid or hang'd for murder.
 Honesty! 'twas a cheat invented first
 To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
 That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
 And lord it uncontroul'd above their betters.

Jaff. Then honesty is but a notion?

Pier. Nothing else:

Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd:
 He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't.
 'Tis a ragged virtue. Honesty! no more on't.

Jaff. Sure thou art honest?

Pier. So, indeed, men think me;

But they are mistaken, Jaffier, I am a rogue
 As well as they;

A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain, as thou seest me.

'Tis true, I pay my debts when they're contracted;

I steal from no man; would not cut a throat

To gain admission to a great man's purse,

Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend

To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter

A blown-up fool above, to crush the wretch beneath me;

Yet, Jaffier, for all this I am a villain.

Jaff. A villain!

Pier. Yes, and a most notorious villain;

To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures,

And own myself a man: to see our senators

Cheat the deluded people with a shew

Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.

They say, by them our hands are free from fetters;

Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;

Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;

Drives us, like wrecks, down the rough tide of power,

Whilst no hold is to save us from destruction.

All that bear this are villains, and I one,

Not to rouse up that gentle call of nature,

And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,

That make us slaves, and tell us, 'tis our charter.

Jaff. I think no safety can be here for virtue,

And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live

In such a wretched state as this of Venice,

Where

Where all agree to spoil the public good,
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity, nor peace my friend,
For the foundation's lost of common good ;
Justice is lame, as well as blind, amongst us :
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for instruments to some new tyranny,
That every day starts, t' enslave us deeper.
Now, could this glorious cause but find out friends,
To do it right, O Jaffier ! then might'st thou
Not wear those seals of woe upon thy face :
The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
And learn to value such a son as thou art.
I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaff. Curs'd be the cause, tho' I, thy friend, be part on't :
Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I'm us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps
May find away to sweeten't to thy spirit.

Pier. Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge —

Jaff. Then from thee
Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then thou art ruin'd !

Jaff. That I long since knew :
I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains :
The sons of public rapine were destroying.
They told me, by the sentence of the law,
They had commission to seize all thy fortune :
Nay, more, Priuli's cruel hand had sign'd it.
Here stood a ruffian with an horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled it into a heap for public sale ;
There was another making villainous jests
At thy undoing : he had ta'en possession
Of all thy ancient and domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold ;
The very bed which on thy wedding-night,
Received thee to the arms of Belvidera,
The scene of all thy joys, was violated
By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaff. Now thank heaven —

Pier. Thank Heaven! for what?

Jaff. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of Venice,
Where brothers, friends, and fathers, are all false;
Where there's no truth, no trust; where Innocence
Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.
Had'st thou but seen, as I did, how at last
Thy Beautiful Belvidera, like a wretch
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean'd,
Kindly look'd up, and at her griefs grew sad,
As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her;
Ev'n the lewd rabble, that were gather'd round
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her,
Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbld pity;
I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues: they pleased me.

Jaff. I thank thee for this story, from my soul;
Since now I know the worse that can befall me;
Ah, Pierre! I have a heart that could have borne
The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me;
But when I think what Belvidera feels,
The bitterness her tender spirit tastes of,
I own myself a coward: bear my weakness;
If, throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom.
Oh! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

Pier. Burn,
First, burn and level Venice to thy ruin.
What! starve, like beggars brats, in frosty weather,
Under a hedge, and wine ourselves to death!
Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance,
Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee:
Command my heart, thou'rt every way its master.

Jaff. No, there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes, and dogs run mad;
Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow;
Revenge, the attribute of gods; they stamp'd it,
With their great image, on our natures. Die!
Consider well the cause, that calls upon thee:
And, if thou'rt base enough, die then. Remember,
Thy Belvidera suffers; Belvidera!
Die——damn first——What! be decently interr'd
In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues that rot in dirty winding sheets,
Suff'red slain fools, the common dung o'th soil!

Jaff.

Jaff. Oh !

Pier. Well said, out with't, swear a little——

Jaff. Swear ! By sea and air ; by earth, by Heav'n and
I will revenge my Belvidera's tears. [hell,

Hark thee, my friend—Priuli—is—a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaff. Agreed.

Pier. Shoot him.

Jaff. With all my heart.

No more ; where shall we meet at night ?

Pier. I'll tell thee ;

On the Rialto, every night at twelve,
I take my evening's walk of meditation :
'There we two'll meet, and talk of precarious
Mischiefs——

Jaff. Farewel.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaff. At any hour ; my plagues
Will keep me waking.

[Exit Pierre.

Tell me why, good heaven,
Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,
Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires,
That fill the happiest man ? Ah, rather why
Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burthens ?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me !
Is this just dealing, Nature ! Belvidera !
Poor Belvidera.

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge !
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face !
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys,
Oh smile ! as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul.

Jaff. As when our loves
Were in their spring ! Has then our fortune chang'd ?
Art thou not, Belvidera, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee ?
If thou are alter'd, where shall I have harbour ?
Where ease my loaded heart ? Oh ! where complain ?

Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth !
Beats not my heart, as 'twould alarm thine

* To a new charge of bliss? I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the gods for all her travail past.

J. J. Can there in woman be such glorious faith?
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false!
O woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you!
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of Heav'n;
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Bel. If love be treasure, we'll be wond'rous rich;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't:
Vows can't express it. When I would declare
How great's the joy, I'm dumb with the big thought;
I swell, I sigh, and labour with my longing.
O! lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
To the high heavens, and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught;
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee,
Give loose to love, with kisses kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.

J. J. O Belvidera! doubly I'm a beggar;
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels and chases me in view.
Can't thou bear cold and hunger: can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?
When banish'd by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
In some far climate, where our names are strangers,
For charitable succour; wilt thou then,
When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads;
Wilt thou then talk thus to me? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love?

Bel. Oh! I will love thee, even in madness love thee;
Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart
Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,
Its roots our food, some cleft our habitation,

I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head ;
And as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest ;
Then praise our gods, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaff. Hear this, you Heav'ns, and wonder how you
made her ?

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
But religion ne'er will let you know
Tranquillity and happiness-like mine ;
Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall,
And rise again, to lift you in your pride ;
They wait but for a storm, and then devour you :
I in my private bark already wreck'd,
Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
In one dear casket, and sav'd only that ;
Since I must wander farther on the shore,
Then hug my little, but my precious store,
Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more. *[Exit.]*

ACT II. SCENE the Rialto. *Enter Jaffier.*

I'M here ; and thus, the shades of night around me.

I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay, surely 'tis so with me ! —

For every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet.

I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,
Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,

To meet the fiend of mankind in his walk.

Sure I'm so curs'd, that, tho' of Heav'n forsaken,

No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.

Hell, hell ! why sleep'st thou ? *Enter Pierre.*

Pier. Sure I've staid too long :

The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.

Speak, who goes there ?

Jaff. A dog, that comes to howl

At yonder moon. What's he, that asks the question ?

Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures,

And ne'er betray their masters ; never fawn

On any that they love not. Well met, friend Jaffier !

Jaff. The same.

Pier. Where's Belvidera !

Jaff. For a day or two

I've lodg'd her privately, till I see farther

What fortune will do with me. Prithee, friend,

If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of Belvidera—

Pier. Speak not of her?

Jaff. Oh, no!

Pier. Nor name her? May be I wish her well.

Jaff. Whom well?

Pier. Thy wife; thy lovely Belvidera.

I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaff. Y'are merry, Pierre.

Pier. I am so:

Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile:

We'll all rejoice. Here's something to buy pins;

Marriage is chargeable.

[*Gives him a purse.*]

Jaff. I but half wish'd

To see the devil, and he's here already. Well!

What must this buy? Rebellion, murder, treason?

Tell me which way I must be damn'd for this.

Pier. When last we parted, we'd no qualms like these.

But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men

Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world

Reform'd since our last meeting? What new miracles

Have happen'd? Has Priu's heart relented?

Can he be honest?

Jaff. Kind Heav'n, let heavy curses

Gall his old age; cramps, aches rack his bones,

And bitterest disquiet wring his heart.

Pier. Nay, could'st thou not

As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all

The senate round, as to one single villain?

Jaff. But curses stick not: Could I kill with cursing,

By Heav'n I know not thirty heads in Venice

Should not be blasted. Senators should rot

Like dogs on dunghills: Oh! for a curse

To kill with!

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better.

Jaff. Ha!

Pier. Daggers.

Jaff. But where are they?

Pier. Oh! a thousand

May be disposed of, in honest hands in Venice.

Jaff. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet a heart, half wrong'd

As thine has been, would find the meaning, Jaffier.

Jaff. A thousand daggers, all in honest hands!

And

And have I not a friend will stick one here?

Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherish'd
T'a nobler purpose, I wou'd be that friend;
But thou hast better friends; friends whom thy wrongs
Have made thy friends; friends worthy to be call'd so.
I'll trust thee with a secret: There are spirits
This hour at work.—But as thou'rt a man,
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods are privy to, then swear
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

Jaff. When thou wou'd'st bind me, is there need of oaths?
For thou'rt so near my heart, that thou may'st see
Its bottom, sound its strength and firmness to thee.
Is coward, fool, or villain in my face?
If I seem none of these I dare believe
Thou wou'd'st not use me in a little cause;
For I am fit for honour's roughest task;
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province:
And for a villainous, inglorious enterprize,
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pier. Nay, 'tis a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier*;
For it is founded on the noblest basis;
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't;
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't;
Openly act a deed the world may gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

Jaff. For liberty!

Pier. For liberty, my friend.

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again:
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward;
All Venice free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just rights: fools shall be pull'd
From Wisdom's seat; those baleful unclean birds,
Those lazy owls, who (perch'd near Fortune's top)
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues, that would rise
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaff. What can I do?

Pier. Can'st thou not kill a senator?

Jaff.

Jaff. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill him,
For herding with that nest of fools or knaves.
By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
Were to be had; and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then!

Jaff. I do, by all the glittering stars,
And yon great ruling planet of the night;
By all good powers above, and ill below;
By love and friendship, dearer than my life,
No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
A council's held hard by, where the destruction
Of this great empire's hatching: there I'll lead thee.
But be a man! for thou'rt to mix with men
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
And rule it when 'tis widest——

Jaff. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning. Yes, I'll be a man;
And charge thee Pierre, whene'er thou seest my fears
Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chace
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom: Vengeance shall have room;
Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaff. Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaff. Revenge! revenge! ——

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, *Aquilina's house, the Greek courtizan.*

Enter Renault.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition? the worst ground
A wretch can build on! 'tis, indeed, at distance,
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;
The height delights us, and the mountain top
Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to Heav'n:
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storms will batter, and what tempest shake us.
Who's there? *Enter Spinoza*

Spin. Renault, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning? Has the clock struck twelve?

Ren. Yes; clocks will go as they are set: but man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain:
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness

In waiting dull attendance ; 'tis the cure
Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us it can frighten.

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone ?

Why are we not together? *Enter Elliot.*

O, sir, welcome !

You are an Englishman : when treason's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behindhand.
In what whor's lap have you been lolling ?
Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
Beef and a sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Ell. Frenchman, you are faucy.

Ren. H w !

Enter Bedamar, the ambassador, Theodore, Bramveil, Duraud, Brabe, Revillido, Mezzana, Ternen, Retrosi, conspirators.

Bed. At difference ; fie !

Is this a time for quarrels ? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl : should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of Providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly as in one great jewel,
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on ;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles ?

Ren. Boys !

Bed. Renault, thy hand.

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart

Long since to every man that mingles here ;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my forward age its weakness.

Bed. Elliot, thou once hadst virtue. I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bend with god-like goodness,
Not half thus courted. 'Tis thy nation's glory
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
Once more embrace, my friend—we'll all take hands.
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist the rooted empire from its basis.
Totters it not already ?

Ell. Would't were tumbling.

Bed. Nay, it should down : this night we seal its ruin.

Enter Pierre.

O ! Pierre ! thou art welcome.
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovely dreadful ; and the fate of Venice

Seems

Seems on thy sword already. O my Mars!

The poets that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesy'd of thee.

Pier. Friend, was not Brutus,
(I mean that Brutus, who in open senate
Stabb'd the first Cæsar that usurp'd the world)
A gallant man?

Ren. Yes, and Cataline too;
Tho' story wrongs his fame: for he conspir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country:
His cause was good.

Bed. And ours as much above it,
As Renault, thou'rt superior to Cethegus,
Or Pierre to Cassius,

Pier. Then to what we aim at,
When do we start? or must we talk for ever?

Bed. No, Pierre, the deed's near birth; fate seems
to have set

The business up, and given it to our care;
I hope there's not a heart or hand amongst us,
But what is firm and ready

All. All.

We'll die with Bedamar.

Bed. O men,
Matchless! as will your glory be hereafter:
The game is for a matchless prize, if won:
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world:
This wretched state has starv'd them in its service:
And by your bounty quicken'd, they're resolv'd
To serve your glory, and revenge their own:
They've all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for the alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

Bed. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied diligence
Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease!
After this night it is resolv'd we meet
No more, till Venice owns us for her lords.

Pier. How lovely the Adriatic whore,
Dress'd in her flames, will shine? Devouring flames!
Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom,
And hiss in her foundation.

Bed. Now if any.
Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,

VENICE PRESERV'D.

17

Have friends or interest he'd wish to save,
Let it be told: the general doom is seal'd;
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my weak-
I have a friend; hear it! such a friend, [ness.
My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I tell you
He knows the very business of this hour;
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it:
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How! all betray'd!

Pier. No—I've dealt nobly with you,
I've brought my all into the public stock:
I'd but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you:
Receive and cherish him; or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless; as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,
To ease your fears, I wear a dagger here
Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter Jaffier, with a dagger.

Bed. His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

Jaff. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd
I dare approach this place of fatal councils;
But I'm amongst you, and by Heav'n it glads me
To see so many virtues thus united
To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.
Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate:
It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.
Would you behold a city flaming? here's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To th' arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, sir.

J. ff. Nay———by Heaven I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces:
You fear me villain, and indeed it's odd
To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,
Of matters that have been so well debated;
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils.
I hate this senate, am a foe to Venice;
A friend to none, but men resolv'd like me

To push on mischief. Oh! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus!

Bed. Pierre, I must embrace him,
My heart beats to this man, as if I knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaff. Still I see

The cause delight ye not. Your friends survey me.
As I were dangerous——But I come arm'd
Against all doubts, and to your trusts will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for
My Belvidera. Ho! my Belvidera!

Bed. What wonder next?

Jaff. Let me intreat you,
As I have henceforth hoped to call you friends,
That all but the ambassador, and this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,
Withdraw a while, to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but Bed. Ren. Jaff. Pier.*]

Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaff. My Belvidera! Belvidera!

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. Who,

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love.
Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaff. Indeed 'tis late.

Bed. Alas! where am I? whither is't you lead me?
Methinks I read distraction in your face,
Something less gentle than the fate you tell me.
You shake and tremble too! your blood runs cold!
Heav'n guard my love, and bless his heart with patience.

Jaff. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,
Who has ordain'd it so, that thou and I,
(Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,
And I, the wretched'st of the race of man)
This very hour, without one tear, must part.

Bel. Part! must we part? Oh, am I then forsaken?
Why drag you from me; whither are you going!
My dear! my life! my love!

Jaff. O, friend!

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaff. Take her from my heart.
She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose.
I charge thee take her, but with tender'st care

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Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows.

Ren. Rise, madam, and command amongst your servants.

Jaff. To you, sir, and your honour, I bequeath her,
And with her this; when I prove unworthy—

[*Gives a dagger.*]

You know the rest ——— Then strike it to her heart;
And tell her, he who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and every night repeated
The passionate vows still of increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Bel. O! thou unkind one;

Ne'er meet more! have I deserv'd this from you?
Look on me, tell me, speak, thou dear deceiver,
Why am I separated from thy love?
If I am false, accuse me, but if true,
Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forsake me,
But pity the sad heart that's tore with parting.

Yet hear me! yet recall me— [*Ex. Ren. Bel. and Bel.*]

Jaff. My friend, where art thou?

Pier. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaff. Is Belvidera gone?

Pier. Renault has led her

Back to her own apartment; but, by Heav'n,
Thou must not see her more, 'till our work's over.

Jaff. Not see her!

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaff. O Pierre, were she but here,
How I would pull her down into my heart.
Gaze on her, till my eye-strings crack'd with love;
Then, swelling, sighing, raging to be blest,
Come, like a panting turtle, to her breast!
On her soft bosom hovering, bill and play,
Confess the cause why last I fled away:
Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er,
And never follow false ambition more.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. SCENE *a chamber.* Enter *Belvidera.*

Bel. I'M sacrific'd! I'm sold! betray'd to shame!
Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me!
He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it;
Left me! undone me! Oh, that I could hate him!
Where shall I go? Oh, whither, whither wander?

Enter *Jaffier.*

Jaff. Can Belvidera want a resting place,
When these poor arms are ready to receive her?

There was a time ———

Bel. Yes, yes, there was a time,
When Belvidera's tears, her cries, and sorrows,
Were not despis'd; when, if she chanc'd to sigh,
Or look but sad——there was indeed a time,
When Jaffier would have ta'en her in his arms,
Eas'd her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her, till he found the cause.

Jaff. O Portia, Portia! What a soul was thine!

Bel. That Portia was a woman; and when Brutus,
Big with the fate of Rome, (Heav'n guard thy safety!)
Conceal'd from her the labours of his mind;
She let him see her blood was great as his,
Flow'd from a spring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles as his love.

Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me; strike it
Here to my heart; and, as the blood flows from it,
Judge if it run not pure as Cato's daughter's.

Jaff. O Belvidera!

Bel. Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain?

Jaff. Ha! a villain?

Bel. Yes, to a villain! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches,
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies?
"To you, sir, and to your honour I bequeath her,
"And with her this: Whene'er I prove unworthy—
"You know the rest—then strike it to her heart."
Oh! why's that rest conceal'd from me? Must I
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?
For such I know I am; that's all my value.
But by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves;
Straight to the senate, tell 'em all I know,
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

Jaff. Is this the Roman virtue; this the blood
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter?
Would she have e'er betray'd her Brutus?

Bel. No:

For Brutus trusted her. Wert thou so kind,
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee?

Jaff. I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me further;
Think I've a tale to tell will shrink thy nature,

Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of,
Into vile tears and despicable sorrows :
Ther, if thou should'st betray me! —

Bel. Shall I swear ?

Jaff. No, do not swear : I would not violate
Thy tender nature with so rude a bond ;
But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast :
I've bound myself, by all the strictest sacraments,
Divine and human —

Bel. Speak !

Jaff. To kill thy father —

Bel. My father !

Jaff. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my Belvidera. He amongst us,
That spares his father, his brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd.

Bel. Oh !

Jaff. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought :
For if thou do'st —

Bel. I know it ; thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike this sword into this bosom ; lay me
Dead on the earth, then thou wilt be safe.
Murder my father ! Tho' his cruel nature
Has persecuted me to my undoing ;
Driven me to basest wants ; can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age ?
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd ?
And canst thou shed the blood that gave me being ?
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers.
Join with such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaff. Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera ! I've engag'd
With men of souls ; fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind : there's not a heart amongst them
But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions.

Bel. What's he, to whose curst hands last night thou
gav'st me ?

Was that well done ? Oh ! I could tell a story
Would rouse thy lion heart out of it's den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

Jaff. Speak on, I charge thee.

Bel. O my love! if e'er
Thy B lvidera's peace deserv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place. Last night, last night!

Jaff. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Bel. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the power of that old son of mischief;
No sooner was I laid on my sad bed,
But that vile wretch approached me, loose,
Then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears; Oh, how I wept and sigh'd!
And shrank and trembled! with'd in vain for him
That should protect me! Thou, alas! wert gone. [sure.

Jaff. Patience, sweet Heav'n, till I make vengeance

Bel. He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou gav'st him,
And, with upbraiding smiles, he said, "Behold it:
"This is the pledge of a false husband's love:"
And in my arms then press'd, and would have clasp'd me;
But with my cries, I fear'd his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell.
These are thy friends! with those thy life, thy honour,
Thy love, all stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaff. No more: I charge thee keep this secret close.
Clear up thy sorrows; look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more; retire,
Retire, my life, and doubt not of my honour;
I'll heal his failings, and deserve thy love.

Bel. Oh! should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaff. Return no more! I would not live without thee
Another night, to purchase the creation.

Bel. When shall we meet again?

Jaff. Anon, at twelve
I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms:
Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Bel. Indeed!

Jaff. By all our loves.

Bel. 'Tis hard to part:
But sure no falsehood ever look'd so fairly.
Farewell; remember twelve.

Jaff. Let Heav'n forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, thy love.

Enter Pierre.

Pier. Jaffier.

Jaff. Who calls?

Pier.

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Pier. A friend, that could have wish'd
T'have found thee otherwise employ'd. What, hunt
A wife on the dull soi ! Sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never
Never be wean'd from caudles and confessions ?
What feminine tales hast thou been list'n'g to,
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs, and tooth-ach got
By thin-sol'd shoes ? Damnation ! that a fellow,
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak thus into corners
To waste his time, and fool his mind with love.

Jaff. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling ?

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaff. Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damn'd condition : for I'll tell thee,
That canker-worm, call'd lechery, has touch'd it :
'Tis tainted vilely. Wouldst thou think it ? Renault
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)
Loves simple fornication like a priest ;
I found him out for watering at my wife ;
He visited her last night, like a kind guardian :
Faith, she has some temptation, that's the truth on't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust.

Jaff. 'Twas somewhat late though,
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed ?

Jaff. Yes, faith ! in virgin sheets,
White as her bosom, Pierre, dish'd neatly up,
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.
Oh ! how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee,
When the rank fit was on him.

Pier. Patience guide me !
He's us'd no violence ?

Jaff. No, no ; out on't violence !
Play'd with her neck ; brush'd her with his grey beard ;
Struggl'd and touz'd ; tickl'd her till she squeak'd a little,
May be, or so— but not a jot of violence—

Pier. Damn him.

Jaff. Ay, so say I : but hush, no more on't,
All hitherto is well, and I believe
Myself no monster yet : Sure it is near the hour
We all should meet for our concluding orders :
Will the ambassador be here in person ?

Pier. No, he has sent commission to that villain Re-
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Exit.

Pier.

To give the executing charge :
 I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
 And keep thy temper ; for a brave revenge
 Ne'er comes too late.

Jaff. Fear not, I am as cool as patience.

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall ;
 His thoughts seem full.

Jaff. Prithee retire and leave me
 With him alone : I'll put him to some trial ;
 See how his reason part will bear the touching.

Pier. Be careful then.

Jaff. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.
 What, be a devil, take a damning oath
 For shedding native blood ! Can there be a sin
 In a merciful repentance ? Oh, this villain !

Enter Renault.

Ren. Perverse and peevish : What a slave is man
 To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him !
 Dispatch the fool her husband—that were well.
 Who's there ?

Jaff. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally, [well.
 The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is very

Jaff. Sir, are you sure of that ?
 Stands she in perfect health ? Beats her pulse even ;
 Neither too hot nor cold ?

Ren. What means that question ?

Jaff. Oh ! women have fantastic constitutions,
 Inconstant in their wishes, always wavering,
 And never fixt. Was it not boldly done
 Even at first sight, to trust the thing I lov'd
 (A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce
 And vigorous as thine ? but thou art honest.

Ren. Who dare accuse me ?

Jaff. Curs'd be he that doubts
 Thy virtue ! I have try'd it, and declare,
 Were I to chuse a guardian of my honour,
 I'd put it in thy keeping ; for I know thee.

Ren. Know me !

Jaff. Ay, know thee. There's no falshood in thee ;
 Thou look'st just as thou art. Let us embrace.
 Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine.

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaff. You lie, sir.

Ren. How !

Jaff.

Jaff. No more,

'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all.

Enter Spinosa, Theodore, Elliot, Revillido, Durand, Bramwell, and the rest of the conspirators.

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore, you are welcome.

Spina. You are trembling, sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed; I am aged;

Full of decay and natural infirmities. *Pier. re-enters.*

We shall be warm, my friends, I hope, to-morrow.

Pier. 'I was not well done; thou should'st have stroak'd And not have gall'd him. [him.]

Jaff. Damn him, let him chew on't.

Heav'n! Where am I? beset with cursed fiends,

That wait to damn me! What a devil's man,

When he forgets his nature——hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late: we are assembled all?

Omnes. All; all.

Ren. Oh! you're brave men, I find,

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons.

To-morrow's rising sun must see you all

Deck'd in your honours. Are the soldiers ready?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand, must possess

St. Mark's; you, captain, know your charge already;

'Tis to secure the ducal palace:

Be all this done with the least tumult possible,

'Till in each place you post sufficient guards:

Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaff. Oh, reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain.

Ren. During this execution, Durand, you

Must in the midst keep your battalia fast;

And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon

That may command the street;

This done, we'll give the general alarm,

Apply petards, and force the ar'senal gates;

Then fire the city round in several places,

Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)

Batter to ruin. But above all, I charge you

Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,

Name nor condition: if there lives a senator.

After to-morrow, though the dullest rogue

That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends.

If possible, let's kill the very name

Of senator, and bury it in blood.

Jaff. Merciless, horrid slave—Ay, blood enough!

Shed

Shed blood enough, old Renault! how thou charm'st me!

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till fate
Join us again, or separate us for ever:
First let's embrace. Heav'n knows who next shall thus
Wing ye together: but let us all remember,
We wear no common cause upon our sword.
Let each man think, that on his single virtue
Depends the good and fame of all the rest;
Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.
You droop, sir.

Jaff. No; with most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren. Let's consider, that we destroy oppression, avarice,
A people nurs'd up equally with vices
And loathsome lusts, which nature most abhors,
And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

Jaff. O Belvidera! take me to thy arms,
And shew me where's my peace, for I have lost it. [*Exit.*]

Ren. Without the least remorse then, let's resolve
With fire and sword to exterminate these tyrants;
Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pier. And may those powers above, that are propitious
To gallant minds, record this cause, and bless it!

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,
Should there, my friends, be found among us one
False to this glorious enterprize, what fate,
What vengeance, were enough for such a villain?

EH. Death here without repentance, hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if as here I stand,
Lifted by fate among her darling sons,
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature;
Could I have such a friend
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground for fear
He meant foul play; may this right hand drop from me,
If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who,
Who would do less? Would'st thou not, Pierre, the same?

Pier. You've singled me, sir, out for this hard question,
As if 'twere started only for my sake?

Am I the thing you fear? Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with your swords. Am I a traitor?

Ren. No: but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less. Come, sir, 'tis now no time

To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffier?

Spin. He left the room just now, in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him: I observed him;
During the time I took for explanation,
He was transported from most deep attention
To a confusion which he could not smother.
What's requisite for safety must be done
With speedy execution; he remains
Yet in our power: I, for my own part, wear
A dagger——

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where?

Ren. Bury'd in his heart.

Pier. Away! we're yet all friends.

No more of this! 'twill breed ill blood among us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the house,
Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing? Who's he'll shed the blood
That's dear to me? Is't you? or you, sir?
What, not one speak! how you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!
Yet not a word! then, sir, I'll tell you a secret;
Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue. [To Ren.]

Ren. A coward—— [Handles his sword.]

Pier. Put up thy sword, old man;

Thy hand shakes as it. Come let's heal this breach;
I am too hot; we yet may all live-friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again! Who's that?

Spin. 'Twas I.

Tbeod. And I.

Ren. And I.

Om. And all.

Spin. Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier. One such word more, by Heav'n, I'll to the senate,
And hang ye all, like dogs, in clusters.

Why weep your coward swords half out their shells?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the senate, and betray us, haste!

Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's rank falsehood.

Fear'st

Fear'st thou not death? Fie, there's a knavish itch
 In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.
 Had Jaffier's wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.
 Faugh—how that stinks!
 Thou die! thou kill my friend! thou! or thou!
 Away, disperse all to your several charges,
 And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you.
 I'll bring the man, whose blood you so much thirst for,
 And you shall see him venture for you fairly—
 Hence! hence, I say. *[Exit Renault angrily.]*

Spin. I fear we have been to blame,
 And done too much.

Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
 The way to melt, and cast me as you will.
 Whence arose all this discord?
 Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd!
 How near a fall was all we'd long been building!
 What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,
 If one, the bravest and the best of men,
 Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,
 Butch'r'd by those, whose cause he came to cherish!
 Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,
 And to your loves me better recommend,
 That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend. }

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV. SCENE, *the Rialto.*

Enter Jaffier and Belvidera.

Jaff. **W**HERE dost thou lead me? Ev'ry step I move,
 Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
 Of a rack'd friend. O, my charming ruin!
 Where are we wandering?

Bel. To eternal honour.

You do a deed shall chronicle thy name
 Among the glorious legends of those few
 That have sav'd sinking nations. Thy renown
 Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
 Who by thy piety have been preserv'd
 From horrid violation. Every street
 Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour;
 And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaff. Rather, remember him, who, after all
 The sacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendship,

In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.

Why wilt thou damn me?

Bel. O inconstant man!

How will you promise; how will you deceive!
Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.
Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live
Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust
Of that infernal devil.

Last night, my love!

Jaff. Name it not again:

It shews a beastly image to my fancy,
Will wake me into madness.
Destruction, swift destruction,
Fall on my coward head.

Bel. Delay no longer then, but to the senate,
And tell the dismal't story ever utter'd:
Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,
Have been prepar'd: how near's the fatal hour.
Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood
Of all its nobles, which to morrow's dawn
Must else see death.

Think what then may prove
My lot; the ravisher may then come safe,
And, 'midst the terror of the public ruin,
Do a damn'd deed.

Jaff. By all Heav'n's powers, prophetic truth dwells
in thee;

For every word thou speak'st strikes thro' my heart.
Just what thou'st made me, take me, Belvidera,
And lead me to the place where I'm to say
This bitter lesson; where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends.
Must I betray my friend! Ah! take me quickly;
Secure me well before that thought's renew'd;
If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

Bel. No; thou'rt my soul itself; wealth, friendship,
honour;

All present joys, and earnest of all future,
Are summ'd in thee.
Come lead me forward, now, like a tame lamb
To sacrifice. Thus, in his fatal garlands



Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays
 Trots by th' enticing flatt'ring priestless' side,
 And much transported with its little pride,
 Forgets his dear companions of the plain;
 Till, by her bound, he's on her altar lain,
 Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the pain. }

Enter Officer and six Guards.

Off. Stand! who goes there?

Bel. Friends.

Off. But what friends are you?

Bel. Friends to the senate, and the state of Venice.

Off. My orders are to seize on all I find

At this late hour, and bring 'em to the council,
 Who are now sitting.

Jaff. Sir, you shall be obey'd.

Now the lot's cast, and fate, do what thou wilt. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, *the Senate-house,*

*Where appear sitting the Duke of Venice, Priuli, Antonio, and
 and eight other Senators.*

Duke. Antonio, Priuli, senators of Venice,
 Speak, why are we assembled here this night?
 What have you to inform us of, concern,
 The state of Venice' honour or it's safety?

Pri. Could words express the story I've to tell you,
 Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
 That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
 We all should weep, tear off these purple robes,
 And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
 On the sad earth, and cry aloud to Heav'n;
 Heav'n knows, if there be an hour to come
 Ere Venice be no more.

All Sen. How!

Pri. Nay, we stand

Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
 Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
 To massacre us all, our wives and children,
 Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
 To lay in ashes; nay, the hour too fix'd;
 The swords, for aught I know, drawn e'en this moment;
 And the wild waste began. From unknown hands
 I had this warning; but, if we are men,
 Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
 That may inform the world, in after-ages,
 Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were. [*A noise without.*]
 Room, room, make room for some prisoners—

Enter

VENICE PRESERV'D.

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Enter Officer and guards.

Duke. Speak there. What disturbance?

Off. Two prisoners have the guards seiz'd in the street,
Who say, they come to inform the reverend senate
About the present danger.

Enter Jaffier and officer.

All. Give 'em entrance—Well, who are you?

Jaff. A villain.

Ant. The man speaks well.

Jaff. Would every man, that hears me,
Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd
Against the state; and you've a share in't too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaff. Think not, that I to save my life came hither;
I know its value better; but in pity
To all those wretches, whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice:
But use me as my dealings may deserve,
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates;
Give him the tortures.

Jaff. That you dare not do:
Your fear won't let you, nor the longing itch
To hear a story which you dread the truth of:
Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.
Cowards are scar'd with threat'nings; boys are whipt
Into confessions: but a steady mind
Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
Give him the tortures!—name but such a thing
Again, by Heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever.
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaff. For myself full pardon,
Besides the life of two and twenty friends,
Whose names are here enroll'd—Nay, let their crimes
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend council,
That in a full assembly of the senate
The thing I swear be ratify'd. Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secret of your danger.

Duke. Propose the oath.

D 2

Jaff.

Jaff. By all the hopes
You have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear.

All. We swear.

Jaff. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you, and your posterity be bless'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Else be curs'd for ever.

Jaff. Then here's the list, and with't the full disclose
Of all that threatens you. [*Delivers a paper.*]
Now, fate, thou hast caught me.

Duke. Give order that all diligent search be made
To seize these men, their characters are public.
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of the fam'd Grecian courtezan,
Call'd Aquilina; see the place secur'd.
You, *Jaffier*, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaff. Would the chains of death
Had bound me safe, ere I had known this minute.

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaff. Sir, if possible,
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose me;
Where I may doze out what I've left of life,
Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee? [*Exit.*]

Off. [*without.*] More traitors; room, room, make

Duke. How's this, guards? [*room there.*]
Where are our guards? Shut up the gates, the treason's
Already at the doors. *Enter Officer.*

Off. My lords, more traitors,
Seiz'd in the very act of consultation;
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter Pierre, Renault, Theodore, Elliot, Revillido, and
other conspirators, in fetters.*

Pier. You, my lords, and fathers,
(As you are pleas'd to call yourselves) of Venice;
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,
Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those that bring you conquest home, and honours?

Duke. Go on; you shall be heard, sir.

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd, for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers? *When*

When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you,
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours;
And you, great Duke, shrank trembling in your palace,
And saw your wife, the Adriatic, plough'd,
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prow than yours;
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians
The task of honour, and the way of greatness?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of so'd-for peace?
And this my recompence! If I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge; or shew the wretch that's base,
And brave enough to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one Jaffier? [*Conf. murmur.*]

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue,
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father, taught me first to love him.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Enter Jaffier guarded.

Pier. My friend too bound! nay then
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall.
Why droops the man who's welfare's so much mine,
They're but one thing? These reverend tyrants, Jaffier,
Call us traitors. Art thou one, my brother?

Jaff. To thee I am the falsest, veriest slave,
That e'er betray'd a generous, trusting friend,
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.
All our fair hopes, which morning was t'crown'd,
Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So, then all's over:
Venice has lost her freedom, I my life.
No more!

Duke. Say; will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy!

Pier. Curs'd be your senate: curse your constitution:
The curse of growing factions and divisions,
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon, or death?

Pier. Death! honourable death!

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can give.
No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council. Captain, guard your
prisoners.

Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment.

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to it.
It will not be the first time I've lodg'd hard
To do the senate service.

Jaff. Hold one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on—

[*Strikes Jaffier.*]

Jaff. By Heav'n, you stir not!
I must be heard; I must have leave to speak.
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou canst not wrong me,
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
With pity and with charity behold me;
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat,
That would'st incroach upon my credulous ears,
And can'st thus vilely? Hence I know thee not;
Leave, hypocrite.

Jaff. Not know me, Pierre!

Pier. No, know thee not! Who art thou?

Jaff. Jaffier, thy friend, thy once-lov'd valu'd friend!
Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd, and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou, Jaffier! thou, my once-lov'd valu'd friend!
By Heav'n's, thou ly'st; the man so call'd, my friend,
Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant;
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely;
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart;
But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward;
Poor, even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect;
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
Prithce avoid; nor longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaff. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I have not.

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me? Dar'st thou call
thyself

That once-lov'd, valu'd friend of mine, [chains?
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these
Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment?
Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false one?

Jaff. All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done
asking,

Pier. What's that?

Jaff. To take thy life, on such conditions

The

The council have propos'd : thou, and thy friends,
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life ! ask my life ! confess ! record myself
A villain, for the privilege to breathe,
And carry up and down this cursed city,
A discontented and repining spirit.
Burthensome to itself, a few years longer ;
To lose it, may be, at last, in a lewd quarrel
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art !
No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,
When only men, like thee, are fit to live in't.

Jaff. By all that's just——

Pier. Swear by some other powers,
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaff. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee.
Till to thyself at least, thou'rt reconcil'd,
However thy resentment deal with me.

Pri. Not leave me !

Jaff. No ; thou shall not force me from thee.
Use me reproachfully, and like a slave ;
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head ; I'll bear it all with patience
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty ;
Lie at thy feet, and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me ;
Till wounded by my sufferings, thou relent
And raise me to thy arms, with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaff. What ?

Pier. A traitor ?

Jaff. Yes.

Pier. A villain ?

Jaff. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward ;
Spiritless, void of honour ; one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame for shameless life !

Jaff. All, all, and more, much more : my faults are
numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms like
Base as thou'rt false—— [thine ?

Jaff. No ; 'tis to me that's granted :
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompence for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee ;
And, as when first my foolish heart took pity

On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
 Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state
 Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
 To rank thee in my list of noble friends ;
 All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,
 Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
 Given with a worthless pledge, thou since hast stol'n :
 So I restore it back to thee again ;
 Swearing by all these powers which thou hast violated,
 Never from this curs'd hour, to hold communion,
 Friendship, or interest, with thee, tho' our years
 Were to exceed those limited the world.
 Take it—farewell—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaff. Say, thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it

Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tir'd with.

Jaff. O Pierre !

Pier. No more.

Jaff. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
 But languish after thine, and ake with gazing.

Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee,
 from me ;

And curses, great as is thy falshood, catch thee. [*Exit.*]

Jaff. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver ;
 And here's the portion he has left me : [*Holds the dagger up.*]
 This dagger. Well remember'd ! with this dagger,
 I gave a solemn vow of dire importance ;
 Parted with this, and Belvidera together.
 Have a care, mem'ry, drive that thought no farther :
 No, I'll esteem it, as a friend's last legacy ;
 Treasure it up, within this wretched bosom,
 Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,
 That, when they meet, they start not from each other.
 So, now for thinking—A blow, call'd traitor, villain,
 Coward, dishonourable coward ; fough !
 Down, busy devil.

Bel. Whither shall I fly ? *Enter Belvidera.*

Where hide me and my miseries together ?

Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted ?

Sunk into trembling fears and desperation,

Not daring to look up to that dear face

Which us'd to smile, even on my fault. ; but, down,

Bending these miserable eyes to earth,

Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaff.

Jaff. Mercy! kind Heav'n has surely endless stores
Hoarded for thee, of blessings yet untasted:
O, Belvidera! I am the wretched'st creature
E'er crawl'd on earth.

My friend too, Belvidera, that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,
Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me:
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

Bel. What has he done?

Jaff. Before we parted,
Ere yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing, and a bleeding heart,
As at his feet I kneel'd, and sued for mercy,
With a reproachful hand, he dash'd a blow;
He struck me, Belvidera! by Heav'n, he struck me!
Buffetted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so?
Damnation! coward!

Bel. Oh! forgive him, Jaffier;
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaff. Ah!

Bel. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain;
What will thy heart do then? Oh! sure 'twill stream,
Like my eyes now.

Jaff. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and tomorrow! broken limbs and bowels!

Bel. The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed,
They say, according to our friends request,
They shall have death, and no ignoble bondage:
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited:
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession,
Warrants are pass'd for public death to-morrow.

Jaff. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard!
unpleaded!

Bel. Nav, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing
To force confession from their dying pangs.
Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!
How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd!

What

Jaff.

What means my love ?

Jaff. Leave me, I charge thee leave me !—Strong temptations

Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what ?

Jaff. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why ?

Jaff. Oh ! by Heav'n, I love thee with that fondness, I would not have thee stay a moment longer Near these curs'd hands ; are they not cold upon thee ?
[*Pulls the dagger half out of his bosom, and puts it back again.*]

Bel. No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms.

To lean thus on thy breast, is softer ease

Than downy pillows, deck'd on leaves of roses.

Jaff. Alas ! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis fill'd with : Fly ere they gall thee. There's a lurking serpent Ready to leap, and sting thee to the heart : Art not thou terrify'd ?

Bel. No.

Jaff. Call to mind

What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought me.

Bel. Hah !

Jaff. Where's my friend ? my friend, thou smiling mischief !

Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late ; for dire revenge

Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans !

Hark, how he groans ! his screams are in my ears

Already ; see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,

And now they tear him—Murder ! purjur'd senate !

Murder—Oh !—Hark thee, traitress, thou hast done this !

Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.

How her eyes speak ! oh, thou bewitching creature !

[*Feeling for his dagger.*]

Madoes can't hurt thee. Come, thou little trembler,

Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe ;

'Tis thy own citadel—Hah—yet stand off,

Heav'n must have justice,

I'll wink, and then 'tis done—

Bel. What means the lord

Of me, my life, and love ? What's in thy bosom,

Thou grasp'st at so ?

Jaff. Know, Belvidera, when we parted last,

I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,

To be thy portion if I e'er prov'd false.

On such condition was my truth believ'd :

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But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.

Bel. Oh! mercy!

[Kneeling.

Jaff. Nay, no struggling.

Bel. Now, then, kill me,

[Leaps on his neck, and kisses him.

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,
Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys
Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaff. I am, I am a coward, witness Heav'n,
Witness it, earth, and ev'ry being witness:
'Tis but one blow! yet, by immortal love,
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.

[He throws away the dagger, and embraces her.

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee;
And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders.
Oh! thou wert either born to save or damn me.
By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,
By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
Or all our future quiet's lost for ever.
Fall at his feet, cling round his rev'rend limbs,
Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears,
Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him,
Crush him in th' arms, torture him with thy softness;
Nor, till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
But conquer him, as thou hast conquer'd me. [Exeunt.

ACT V. SCENE, *an apartment in Priuli's house.*

Enter Priuli solus.

WHY, cruel Heav'n, have my unhappy days
Been lengthen'd to this sad one? Oh! dishonour,
And deathless infamy have fall'n upon me.
Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.
But then, my only child, my daughter wedded:
There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory,
To make it rot and stink to after-ages.

Enter Belvidera in a long mourning veil.

Bel. He's there, my father, my inhuman father,
That for three years has left an only child
Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,
And cruel ruin!—oh—

Pri. What child of sorrow
Art thou, that com'st wrapt up in weeds of sadness,

And—

And mov'st as if thy steps were tow'rd's a grave ?

Bel. A wretch who, from the very top of happiness
Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,
And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

Pri. What would'st thou beg for ?

Bel. Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*]
By the kind tender names of child and father,
Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Pri. My daughter !

Bel. Yes, your daughter—and you've oft told me,
With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

Pri. Don't talk thus.

Bel. Yes, I must : and you must hear too.

I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh ! do not curse him ;

He would not speak so hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.

Pri. Ah ! what means my child ?

Bel. Oh ! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

Pri. Kill thee !

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith
And covenant against your state and senate,
He gave me up a hostage for his truth :
With me a dagger, and a dire commission,
When'er he fail'd, to plunge it thro' this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
T' attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail'd, and bless'd me with success !
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to suffer.
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows t' appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th' atonement.

Pri. Heav'ns !

Bel. If I was ever then your care, now hear me :
Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made a sacrifice.

Pri. O't, my heart's comfort !

Bel. Will you not, my father ?

Weep not, but answer me.

Pri. By Heav'n, I will.

Not one of them but what shall be immortal.
 Canst thou forgive me all my follies past ?
 I'll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,
 Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
 Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
 Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee ;
 Peace to thy heart. Farewell.

Bel. Go, and remember,
 'Tis Belvidera's life her father pleads for. [*Ex. severally.*]

SCENE, *changes to a garden.* Enter *Jaffier*.

Jaff. Final destruction seize on all the world.
 Bend down, ye Heav'ns, and shutting round this earth,
 Crush the vile globe into its first confusion.

Enter Belvidera.

Bel. My life——

[*Meeting him.*]

Jaff. My plague——

[*Turning from her.*]

Bel. Nay, then I see my ruin.

If I must die!

Jaff. Nay, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,
 Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy ;
 But answer me to what I shall demand,
 With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Bel. I will, when I've done weeping——

Jaff. Fie, no more on't——

How long is't since that miserable day
 We wedded first ?

Bel. Oh ! hah !

Jaff. Nay, keep in thy tears,
 Lest they unman me too.

Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot ;
 The words you utter sound so very sadly,
 The streams will follow——

Jaff. Come, I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Bel. But was't a miserable day ?

Jaff. A curs'd one.

Bel. I thought it otherwise ; and you've often sworn
 you blest'd it.

Jaff. 'Twas a rash oath.

Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too ?

Jaff. No, Belvidera ; by th' eternal truth,
 I doat with too much fondness.

Bel. Still so kind !

Still then do you love me ?

Jaff. Man-ne'er was blest'd
 Since the first pair met, as I have been.

E

Bel.

Bel. Then sure you will not curse me ?

Jaff. No, I'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee.

* 'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.

Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together ;
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning.

Jaff. Did I not say, I came to bless thee ?

Bel. You did.

Jaff. Then hear me, bounteous Heav'n :
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
Where everlasting sweets are always springing,
With a continual giving hand : let peace,
Honour, and safety, always hover round her ;
Feed her with plenty ; let her eyes ne'er see
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning ;
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
Harmless as her own thoughts ; and prop her virtue,
To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd ;
And comfort her with patience in our parting !

Bel. How ! parting, parting !

Jaff. Yes, for ever parting ;
I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon Heav'n,
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,
We part this hour for ever.

Bel. Oh ! call back
Your cruel blessing ; stay with me, and curse me.

Jaff. Now hold, heart, or never.

Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
Pity my sad condition ; speak, but speak.

Jaff. Oh ! oh !

Bel. By these arms that now cling round thy neck,
By these poor streaming eyes—

Jaff. Murder ! unhold me : *[Draws his dagger.]*
By th' immortal destiny that doom'd me
To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer ;
Resolve to let me go, or see me fall—

Hark, the dismal bell *[Passing bell tolls.]*

Tolls out for death ! I must attend its call too ;
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me :
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewel for ever.

Bel. Leave thy dagger with me,

Bequeath

Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting!
Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

[Going out, looks back at him.]

Jaff. Yet stay :

We have a child, as yet a tender infant ;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone ;
Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour,
But never let him know his father's story,
I charge thee guard him from the wrongs, my fate
May do his future fortune, or his name.

Now—nearer yet— *[Approaching each other.]*

Oh that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friends! my oath!
This, and no more.

Bel. Another, sure another,
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of,
I'll giv't him truly.

Jaff. So—now farewell.

Bel. For ever?

Jaff. Heav'n knows, for ever; all good angels guard
thee. *[Exit.]*

Bel. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.
Curs'd be my days, and doubly curs'd my nights.

Oh! give me daggers, fire, or water:
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and foaming round my sinking head,
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom!

Oh! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury:
The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain;
I long for thick substantial sleep: Hell! Hell!
Burst from the center, rage and roar aloud,

If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am. *[Exit.]*

SCENE opening, discover a scaffold, and a wheel prepared for the execution of Pierre; then enter Officer, Pierre, and guards, Executioner, and a great Rabble.

Pier. My friend not yet come? *Enter Jaffier.*

Jaff. Hold: eyes be dry;
Heart, strengthen me to bear
This hideous sight, and humble me. Take
The last forgiveness of a dying friend,
Betray'd by my vile falsehood, to his ruin.
O Pierre!

Pier. Yet nearer.

Jaff. Crawling on my knees,
And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee:

How shall I look up to thy injur'd face,
That always us'd to smile with friendship on me?
It darts an air of so much manly virtue,
That I, methinks, look little in thy sight,
And stripes are fitter for me than embraces.

Pier. Dear to my arms, tho' thou'st undone my fame,
I can't forget to love thee. Prythee Jaffier,
Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee;
I am now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wishes
Of all good men like thee, to bless my journey.

Jaff. Good! I am the vilest creature, worse than e'er,
Suffer'd the shameful death thou'rt going to taste of. [dy.

Off. The time grows short, your friends are dead already.

Jaff. Dead!

Pier. Yes, dead, Jaffier; they've all dy'd like men too.
Worthy their character,

Jaff. And what must I do?

Pier. O Jaffier!

Jaff. Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,
And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

Pier. Friend! couldst thou yet be a friend, a generous friend,

I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows.

Heav'n knows I want a friend.

Jaff. And a kind one,

That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No! live, I charge thee, Jaffier.

Jaff. Yes, I will live:

But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd,
At such a rate as Venice shall long groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou?

Jaff. I will, by Heav'n.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee. Oh!—yet—shall I trust thee?

Jaff. No; I've been false already.

Pier. Do'st thou love me?

Jaff. Rip up heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness. [He weeps.

Jaff. Tears! Amazement! Tears!

I never saw thee melted thus before;
And know there's something labouring in thy bosom,
That must have vent: though I'm a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine? [Pointing to the wheel.

Jaf.

Jaff. Why?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nations quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,
Be expos'd a common carcase on the wheel!

Jaff. Hah!

Pier. Speak! is't fitting?

Jaff. Fitting.

Pier. Yes, is't fitting?

Jaff. What's to be done?

Pier. I'd have thee undertake

Something that's noble to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Off. The day grows late, sir,

Pier. I'll make haste. O Jaffier!

Tho' thou'lt betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaff. No more of that: thy wishes shall be satisfy'd;
I have a wife, and she shall bleed: my child too
Yield up his little throat, and all

T' appease thee— *[Going away Pierre holds him.]*

Pier. No—this—no more. *[He whispers Jaffier.]*

Jaff. Hah! is't then so?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaff. I'll do't.

Pier. Remember.

Off. Sir.

Pier. Come, now I'm ready.

[He and Jaffier ascend the scaffold.]

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour;

Keep off the rabble, that I may have room

To entertain my fate and die with decency.

Com'. *[Takes off his gown, executioner prepares to bind him.]*

You'll think on't? *[To Jaffier.]*

Jaff. I won't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pier. Now, Jaffier! now I'm going. Now—

[Executioner having bound him.]

Jaff. Have at thee.

Thou honest heart, then—here—

[Stabs him.]

And this is well too.

[Stabs himself.]

Pier. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.

This was done nobly—We have deceiv'd the senate.

Jaff. Bravely.

Pier. Ha, ha, ha!—oh! oh!

[Dies.]

Jaff. Now, ye curs'd rulers,
Thus of the blood y'ave shed, I make libation,
And sprinkle it mingled. May it rest upon you,

And

And all your race. Be henceforth peace a stranger
Within your walls; let plagues and famine waste
Your generations—O poor Belvidera!

Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,
A token that with my dying breath I blest'd her,
And the dear little infant left behind me.

I'm sick—I'm quiet.

[Dies.]

Soft music. Enter Belvidera distracted, led by two of her women, Priuli and servants.

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying
Heav'n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to
bed,

Pr'ythee, my love. The winds; hark how they
whistle;

And the rain beats: Oh! how the weather shrinks me!

You are angry now, who cares? Pish, no indeed,

Chuse then, I say you shall not go, you shall not,

Whip your ill-nature; get you gone then; Oh!

Are you return'd? See, father, here he's come again:

Am I to blame to love him; O, thou dear one.

Why do you fly me? Are you angry still then?

Jaffier, where art thou? Father, why do you do thus?

Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's there some-
where.

Stand off, I say: What gone? Remember't, tyrant:

I may revenge myself for this trick, one day.

I'll do't—I'll do't.

Enter Officer.

Pri. News, what news? [Officer whispers Priuli.]

Off. Most sad, sir;

Jaffier, upon the scaffold, to prevent

A shameful death, stabb'd Pierre, and next himself:

Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Bel. Ha! look there!

My husband bloody, and his friend too! Murder!

Who has done this? Speak to me, thou sad vision;

On these poor trembling knees I beg it—Vanish'd—

Here they went down—Oh, I'll dig, I'll dig the den up!

You shan't delude me thus. Hea, Jaffier, Jaffier!

Peep up, and give me but a look. I have him!

I've got him, father: Oh!

My love! my dear! my blessing! help me! help me!

They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.

Nay

VENICE PRESERV'D.

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Nay—now they pull so hard—farewel——

[Dies.

Pri. Oh ! guard me from the sight on't.

Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning ;

Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun,

May never enter : hang it round with black ;

Set up one taper, that may light a day,

As long as I've to live : and there all leave me :

Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,

But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

F I N I S.



